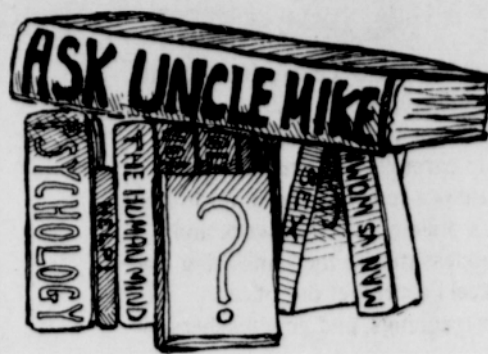


Dear Uncle Mike,

I respect your opinion and I was wondering what you think about the whole penis extension theory. As in, do men drive big, jacked up cars because their penises are little? What kind of a car do you drive?

Lucy in Eugene



Dear Lucy,

After much thought, Uncle Mike has backed away from the whole penis extension theory on the grounds that it fails to make distinctions between the penis as metaphor and the penis as actual appendage. Before going one inch further, Uncle Mike wants to make clear his stance on gender determined behavior. In terms of quantum physics, from which all manifestation flows, there are two modes of action in the universe: emission and absorption. They couldn't be more different. Their relationship is complementary, the pairing of unlikes. Much of the pain and sadness between male and female humans would go away if the principle of complementarity were taught in kindergarten.

Which brings us to testosterone and estrogen, the hormonal duality that reflects emission/absorption like a fun house mirror, and contributes so much to the human comedy. Uncle Mike's no rocket psychologist but, judging from what he's seen, over and over again and with his own eyes, testosterone predisposes males to emit (often inappropriately), and females to absorb (often too completely). The relationship implies no hierarchy, only difference, and the certainty of embarrassing abuses on both sides. Successful humans of either gender are marked by an ability to emit and absorb selectively, balancing the forces of nature in ways that make them pleasant dinner companions. It's dangerous to generalize, but it seems safe to say that male humans who drive big, jacked up cars are still laboring to achieve this balance.

Which brings us, nearly, to penises. Men, especially young ones, define themselves in terms of their extension in the world: the shadow they cast on the brick walls of whatever power system they've bought into. It's the penis as general principle, rather than the penis of fact, that revs its motor at stop lights, grins like an idiot on prozac, and honks its horn. It (meaning the human the principle is operating through) does this because it hasn't a clue, is nervous as a stray cat, and feels any emission is better than none. The penis being extended is a mental construct, although in most cases this seems too much to expect of the men involved.

Now then, for the heart of your question. Is there a correlation between testosterone induced penile behavior and the actual anatomy of those who display it? Uncle Mike hasn't the foggiest notion. He's seen no published studies and, given the nature of the times, would be suspicious of any findings. We do know this: most young males, and some old enough to know better, worry unduly about their extension. (While you ladies are laughing and snorting, remember men have time to do this because they're not obsessing about their breasts.) Given this undercurrent of anxiety, one could say with reasonable confidence that men who drive oversized Tonka toys are making up for a real or imagined shortcoming. It's a funny world, one whose historians suggest that much of the past, especially its least pleasant episodes, can be explained in terms of males acting out issues of low self esteem. Uncle Mike has no quarrel with this theory.

You ask what sort of car Uncle Mike drives. He doesn't. Walking makes him feel almost adequate.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I'd feel stupid writing to Ann Landers, but I feel okay about writing to you. I'm 26, my girlfriend is 25. We've been living together for a year now. I really love her a lot and I know she loves me. The problem is she doesn't trust me. I work in the restaurant business and there are a lot of pretty women around. She knows I've got a lot of opportunities to mess around and is convinced I must be. I'm not. I've never really been tempted. I knew she was jealous before we moved in together but I thought it would get better the more she knew me. It's not. I think it's getting worse. She came in the other night and caught me talking to the bartender. Now she's convinced we've either done the big nasty or are thinking about it. You're an older guy. You've been around. What do you say to a suspicious woman to make her trust you?

Eddie in Eugene

Dear Eddie,

Uncle Mike would feel stupid writing to Ann Landers too, and is none too sure about the people who write to him. As a first step on your path to being trusted, Uncle Mike would suggest you change your name. Don't take this personally, but nowhere in western literature, including film and television, has there ever been a character named Eddie who could be trusted. Besides, you're 26 years old, and even if you wear your baseball cap backwards, you're a card carrying adult. Introduce yourself as Edward, or Ed. You should also vow never again to refer to making love, or even having sex, as 'doing the big nasty'.

What do you say to a suspicious woman to make her trust you? To begin with, the truth. You say your friend walked in and "caught" you talking to the bartender. Interesting choice of words, Eddie. If you're telling the truth and have never "really even been tempted" (pardon Uncle Mike while he rolls his eyes), tell this truth often and in as many ways as possible. When's the last time you told the woman she was beautiful, that you couldn't imagine life without her, that you'd lie down in front of a stampeding herd of Mack trucks for her? When's the last time you meant it? You say there are a lot of pretty women in your workplace. This implies you've noticed. Uncle Mike trusts you don't 'notice' them when you're with the woman who should be the center of your attention. The casting of lascivious, or even appreciative, glances qualifies as suspicious behavior. Women are pretty silly, huh Eddie.

Now that we've drilled your teeth, let's start on hers. Life's a wierd business and some folks have a hard time trusting any part of it. Women have a hard time trusting men because, when it comes to fidelity, men tend to be scoundrels and liars. You need to face the possibility that this woman is never going to trust you. Never. There must be harder things to work around in a relationship, but Uncle Mike (who is, as you pointed out, an older guy who's been around) hasn't an inkling what they'd be. The whole idea of love involves tearing down the owner-built walls that separate us, not just from our mates, but from the world. Trust is another word for faith; faith that the person you love would never intentionally hurt you. Unless you truly believe your partner would not, when push comes to shove, drive a stake through your heart, love's a real stretch. It's not, however, an impossible dream. It's no accident you're with this woman, Ed. Everyone's a teacher, everyone's a student. You teach her about trust, she teaches you about inspiring it. Cooperation, just like on Sesame Street.

Prostitutes are human sacrifices on the altar of monogamy.

A. Schopenhauer

THERAPY PAGE

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